



# Seat Belt Safety

Kentucky has a primary seat belt law, meaning drivers can be stopped and cited if *anyone* in the vehicle is not wearing a seat belt. Those in violation will be subject to a fine. With the passage of the primary law, Kentucky's seat belt usage rate increased from 67.2% in 2006 to 71.8% in 2007.

## Top Five Myths and Facts About Seat Belts

**Myth #1:** I don't need to wear a seat belt when driving at slow speeds or on short trips.

**Fact:** Most crash deaths occur within 25 miles of home and at speeds of less than 40 miles per hour.

**Did You Know?** Fatal injuries to unrestrained motorists have occurred in vehicles traveling as slow as 12 miles per hour. An unbelted person hitting a windshield in a 40-mile-per-hour crash would feel the same force as hitting the ground after falling off a five-story building.



**Myth #2:** If I wear a seat belt, I might get trapped in my car if it catches on fire or becomes submerged under water.

**Fact:** Crashes involving fire or water happen in only 1/2 of one percent of all crashes. The greatest danger to vehicle occupants is from the impact of the crash itself.

**Did You Know?** Seat belt wearers are more likely to be uninjured and conscious after a crash, allowing them to get out of the vehicle quickly.

**Myth #3:** If I don't wear a seat belt I'm not affecting anyone but myself. If I'm injured or die in a crash from not wearing a seat belt, that's my business!

**Fact:** Deaths and injuries that result from non-use of seat belts cost everyone in the form of higher insurance premiums, medical costs, property damage, and loss of productivity. Plus, the emotional cost to victims' families is too great to measure.

**Did You Know?** Kentuckians alone pay over \$2 billion each year for car crash victims. Citizens not involved in crashes pay three-fourths of that cost.

**Myth #4:** I don't need to wear a seat belt because my vehicle has air bags.

**Fact:** Air bags are designed to work in combination with seat belts, providing supplemental protection during certain types of crashes. Seat belts help to properly position occupants to maximize the airbags' benefits and help restrain occupants during the initial impact and any following collisions.

**Did You Know?** Air bags inflate at a speed of over 100 miles per hour. An unrestrained or improperly restrained occupant can be seriously injured or killed by the force of an activated air bag.



**The risk of injury is greater in the front seat for children, with or without an air bag. Research shows it is best for children age 12 and under to ALWAYS ride in the back seat.**

## Myth #5: I might be saved if I'm thrown clear of the crash.

**Fact:** Being thrown to safety in a crash is almost impossible. Your best bet for survival is to be securely held in place by the seat belt.

**Did You Know?** You are 25 times more likely to be killed in a crash when thrown from a vehicle. You may be thrown through the windshield and into another vehicle or fixed object, scraped along the pavement, or even crushed by your own vehicle.



In 2007 in Kentucky, 391 (55.9%) of the 864 total motor vehicle fatalities were not restrained. Of the unrestrained fatalities, 116 were totally ejected and 35 were partially ejected. Nationwide, approximately 75% of those totally ejected in a crash are killed.

## Do Seat Belts Really Help In A Crash?



Yes! Seat belts are the most effective safety feature on vehicles today; however, nearly one in five Americans still fail to regularly wear their seat belts when driving or riding in a motor vehicle.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45% and the risk of injury by 50%. For light truck occupants, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60% and injury by 65%.

## How Do I Correctly Wear A Seat Belt?

During a crash, properly fastened seat belts distribute the forces of rapid deceleration over larger and stronger parts of the body, such as the chest, hips, and shoulders. The seat belt stretches slightly to slow your body down and to increase its stopping distance.

The difference between the belted person's stopping distance and the unbelted person's stopping distance is significant, and often the difference between life and death.

### The Correct Way to Wear a Safety Belt

#### WEAR IT LOW

■ The lap portion of the safety belt should be two to four inches below the waist, snug across your hip and pelvic bones — NOT across your stomach.

■ In a crash, a belt worn too high on the abdomen places you at high risk of potentially fatal internal injuries.



#### WEAR IT SNUG

■ The shoulder portion should rest smoothly over your collarbone and across your chest and shoulders. Pull the belt out and let it retract to remove slack.

■ Safety belt webbing will stretch slightly in a crash. If not snug before the crash, you may slide under and out or up and over the belt.



#### WEAR IT RIGHT

■ If the belt rubs against the neck, try changing the seat position or the way you sit.

■ Some vehicles have a shoulder belt adjusters which slide up or down to provide a correct, comfortable fit.

Belt extenders may also be purchased.

■ Some cars feature a shoulder belt that automatically comes across your chest, but you must fasten the lap portion manually to achieve proper use.

■ Safety belts should be worn over the front of the shoulder, never behind your back or under your arm.

